

IN SENATE
OF
THE UNITED STATES,

JANUARY 23, 1818.

The Committee of Claims, to whom was referred the petition of Isaac Briggs,

REPORT:

That they find among the documents referred to by the petitioner, a letter from the Secretary of the Treasury dated March 2, 1816, addressed to the chairman of the committee to whom the petitioner's case had been referred at that time. To this letter the committee refer for a view of the merits of the claim. The prayer of the petitioner appearing reasonable to the committee in part, they report a bill for the petitioner's relief.

Treasury Department,

March 2, 1816.

SIR,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the communication from the committee of the Senate, to whom was referred the petition of Isaac Briggs, requesting,

1. A report stating the difficulties which have arisen in the Treasury Department, in relation to the subjects of the petition.
2. A suggestion of the particular legislative aid requisite to obviate such difficulties as oppose themselves to a just and fair settlement of Mr. Briggs' account with the United States.

In compliance with the request of the committee, I have collected, as expeditiously as was practicable, the necessary information and respectfully submit the following answers:

I. The petitioner was a surveyor of the public lands south of the state of Tennessee from the commencement of 1803, to the commencement of 1807. In the prosecution of the duties of his office, he was authorized and required to make all necessary disbursements and advances, and to draw, from time to time, on the Secretary of the Treasury for the amount, with which he was charged on the books of the Treasury, and could only be discharged by the returns

of his deputies, and the settlement of their accounts. The petitioner states, (and the allegation is ascertained to be true,) that, at the close of the year 1806, he suddenly left the Mississippi territory, to convey a confidential communication to the President of the United States, relative to the alarming state of the country at that period. His office, books, and papers remained under the care of a deputy and his clerk, with instructions to transmit his accounts and vouchers to the seat of government for settlement; but this, it is alledged, was only partially done; so that a settlement at the Treasury in the year 1808, exhibited a balance against him to the amount of \$9,217 67 for the recovery of which he was arrested in the spring of 1815. On the 12th of May, 1815, the petitioner presented an account at the Treasury, claiming credits, which, if allowed, would reduce the balance against him, to the sum of \$ 888 29.

The difficulties which have arisen in the Treasury Department, in relation to the last account of the petitioner, will appear from the original documents and the statement of the Auditor of the Treasury, now transmitted. They are, principally, 1st. That the dates of the items and vouchers of the account generally, are prior to the settlement of 1808; and it is, therefore inferred, that they have been already credited. The inference is resisted by the petitioner; and as the statement and documents, appertaining to the former reports upon his accounts, were lost in the Register's office, at the time of the British invasion, there are no official means for deciding the controverted point. 2d. That the item for surveying the Mississippi and Chepalaga, in 1806, was not allowed, probably, in any former settlement, as it was supposed by the Auditor not to be authorized by any law. 3d. That there is not any provision by law, to compensate the petitioner for exploring the country, in order to ascertain the best ground for a road from the seat of government to New Orleans, in the year 1804.

1. The first difficulty cannot, in equity, be deemed fatal to the claim of the petitioner. The original statements and documents, by which the correctness of his claims might have been tested, were lost without his fault; and it seems just, that the next best proof, of which the case is susceptible, should be admitted, to negative the general inference that has been drawn against him.

2. The 13th section of the act of the 21st of April, 1806, (8 Vol. 122) provided, "that the Secretary of the Treasury be authorized to cause a survey to be made from the sea coast of New Orleans, from the mouth of the Mississippi, to Vermillion bay, inclusively, and as much further westwardly, as the President of the United States shall direct; and also of the bays, inlets, and navigable waters connected therewith: provided, that the expenses of such survey should not exceed 5,000 dollars." The survey of the Mississippi river and Chepalaga, appears to have been executed under the authority of this provision; but the inference of a former credit for the charge, drawn from the date of the voucher, will recur.

3. There was no previous law, authorizing the petitioner to explore and lay out a road from Washington to New Orleans; but it appears, that the task was undertaken at the request of the President of the United States, without a view to compensation, upon a supposition, that it would not greatly add to the expense and trouble of the petitioner, while prosecuting his official duties; that the task was performed in a very able manner, at a considerable expense of time, health, and money; and that the survey of the road, as made and returned by the petitioner, has been adopted and carried into effect by Congress. The origin, progress, and value, of the service rendered by the petitioner, are set forth in a letter, which has been received from the late President, dated the — ult. — which, and the documents that accompanied it, are now submitted to the committee. The adoption of the petitioner's survey of the road will appear from the message of the President to Congress, on the 1st and 22d of February, 1805, communicating the survey and report; and from the acts of the 3d of March, 1805, (7 Vol. p. 321-3) of the 21st April, 1806, (8 Vol. p. 125-7,) and of the 3d of March, 1807, (8 Vol. 315.)

The extent and value of the service rendered by the petitioner, having been thus recognized by the executive and legislative departments; the question of remuneration arose upon the legal, as well as equitable, principles of an implied contract, that the government should pay an equivalent for the benefit, which it accepted and enjoyed. From the year 1805 until 1810, the subject, occasionally, occupied the attention of Congress in various forms, without producing any positive result. And it is again presented for legislative consideration, as constituting a just item of credit, in the petitioner's accounts with the public.

II. In order to accomplish a fair and just settlement of the petitioner's accounts, it seems to be requisite,

1. That the accounting officers of the Treasury, be authorised to credit the petitioner for the charges on his accounts, upon the best evidence of which the case is susceptible, under all the circumstances attending it.

2. That they be, also, authorized, to credit a reasonable charge for the survey of the river Mississippi and Chepalaga.

3. And that they be also authorized to credit a reasonable charge for exploring the route of the road from Washington to New Orleans.

With the letter, I have transmitted the original documents referred to, which I pray you to return, when the committee has no longer use for them.

I have the honor to be,

Very respectfully, Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

A. J. DALLAS.

The Hon. Wm. Hill Wells.

The first part of the paper is devoted to a general discussion of the problem of the origin of life. It is shown that the problem is one of the most important and most difficult in the history of science. The second part of the paper is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem of the origin of life. It is shown that the problem is one of the most important and most difficult in the history of science. The third part of the paper is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem of the origin of life. It is shown that the problem is one of the most important and most difficult in the history of science. The fourth part of the paper is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem of the origin of life. It is shown that the problem is one of the most important and most difficult in the history of science. The fifth part of the paper is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem of the origin of life. It is shown that the problem is one of the most important and most difficult in the history of science. The sixth part of the paper is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem of the origin of life. It is shown that the problem is one of the most important and most difficult in the history of science. The seventh part of the paper is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem of the origin of life. It is shown that the problem is one of the most important and most difficult in the history of science. The eighth part of the paper is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem of the origin of life. It is shown that the problem is one of the most important and most difficult in the history of science. The ninth part of the paper is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem of the origin of life. It is shown that the problem is one of the most important and most difficult in the history of science. The tenth part of the paper is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem of the origin of life. It is shown that the problem is one of the most important and most difficult in the history of science.